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ABSTRACT

College and university professors tend to be highly professional in regard to their academic discipline but not to their teaching role. This failure is due in part to the academic reward structure and in part to a general disdain for the pedagogical concerns of the schools of education. The impression held by graduate schools that there is nothing to learn about college-level teaching needs to be replaced by an apprentice teaching program. A credit course on teaching methods requisite to the completion of any Ph.D. should be made a part of the graduate curriculum. This would be coordinated with the appointment of graduate teaching assistants and fellows, so that the theoretical phase is encountered prior to assuming teaching duties and the applied phase is concurrent with those duties. Systematic evaluation of the applied phase should be provided. The success of such a proposal, however, depends primarily on the faculty's commitment to it. (Author/CCM)

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Preparing our Future Teachers, a paper for ISA Panel on Undergraduate Education, March 1972, John P. Lovell

In one of a collection of articles on The American College edited ten years ago by Nevitt Sanford, Joseph Katz made an interesting observation about college and university teachers which unfortunately still holds true. He noted that we academics tend to be highly professional in regard to the subject matter that we teach, but not at all professional as educators. For instance, we insist upon reasonably rigorous standards of evidence for conclusions reached in our research; but we tend to rely upon folklore and "common sense" when it comes to making decisions about what methods or approaches to use in transmitting our knowledge to our students, and when it comes to evaluating whether our teaching has been successful or not.

It seems to me that in part the failure of teachers at the college and university level to approach their high teaching responsibilities with the same/professional standards that they apply to research is attributable to the reward structure problem that Ed Fedder's paper addresses; in part one may also detect among academics something of a haughty disdain for the pedagogical concerns that long have been the hallmark of schools of education. The traditional obsession of schools of education with

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gimmickry, with belaboring the obvious, and with trivia no doubt made many of them appropriate objects of ridicule, at least at some point in their evolution. But surely we academics have overreacted if we insist on clinging smugly to the myth that "good teachers are born, not made," and to the related myth that good teaching techniques are acquired and recognized only by instinct, not by systematic means that would enable them to be transmitted from one teacher to another.

Graduate training becomes relevant to the concern of this panel with undergraduate education not only because many undergraduates take course work from graduate students, but more importantly--in long range terms--because our graduate students represent the professors of tomorrow. Yet what training do we provide these future professors for their responsibilities as teachers? I must fail to respond to my own plea for bringing systematic data to bear on questions pertinent to teaching, and marshall only impressionistic data. I stand eager to be corrected, however, if I am wrong in my impression that although a great many--perhaps most--students in Ph.D. programs in political science are afforded some opportunity to assume teaching roles at least involving giving a few lectures, rarely is any systematic guidance or evaluation of the apprentice teaching provided. Instead, implicitly our graduate programs perpetuate the prevailing mythology: there is

nothing to learn about teaching at the college level; or at any rate, anything worth learning can be acquired only through experience.

I shall not dwell on my own impressions of how deficient we are in preparing potential Ph.D.'s for teaching; however, I would hope that others would offer their observations on this point in discussion. I do have a number of suggestions as to what might be done to remedy the deficiencies, to the extent that they exist.

First, I would favor including in the graduate curriculum a course on teaching, to include a theoretical and an applied phase. The theoretical phase would expose the student to empirical and "softer" analyses that are presently available on the success and limitations of various teaching situations, techniques, approaches; on personality and intellectual capabilities, interests, and stage of development of college students, including data on the extent to which the needs and interests of students from various subsectors of the society might vary from one another (e.g. women-men, blacks-whites, ghetto-rural, married-single, veterans-non-vets, native U.S.-foreign); studies of the nature and functions of a modern college or university, and of the power structure of universities; and readings and discussion of distinctive

problems and opportunities in teaching (in this case) international relations, including exposure to innovative programs and approaches that have been utilized.

Secondly, I would coordinate the course with the appointment of graduate teaching assistants and teaching fellows, so that the latter had had the theoretical phase prior to first assuming teaching duties, and had the applied phase concurrent with those duties. The applied phase would include not only practice teaching, but regular sessions with a faculty member and with other TA's to discuss the teaching experience. Systematic evaluation of the teaching should be provided, including self-evaluation techniques, such as video-taping of classroom sessions, available for private replay, where such facilities are available.

Third, I favor granting credit for successful completion of the theoretical and the applied phase of the course, respectively, the latter grade based upon teaching performance.

Fourth, I would advocate making completion of the course with a grade of B or above a condition for certification for the Ph.D. for all candidates who expect to be teaching upon completion of their graduate program.

There are a number of requisites for success of a proposal such as this--the primary one being a commitment on the part of faculty and their broad involvement in making it successful.

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